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Women's health champion, Dr Riko Muranaka, awarded the 2017 John Maddox Prize for Standing up for Science

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Dr Riko Muranaka has been awarded the international 2017 John Maddox Prize¹ for promoting science and evidence on a matter of public interest, despite facing difficulty and hostility in doing so. A journalist and lecturer at Kyoto University, Dr Muranaka is recognised for her work championing the use of evidence in public discussions of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine.

The HPV vaccine is recognised by the scientific and medical community, and endorsed by the World Health Organisation² as key to preventing cervical and other cancers. In Japan the vaccine has been subject to a misinformation campaign to discredit its benefits, resulting in vaccination rates falling from 70% to less than 1%.

Dr Muranaka's work to put the evidence for the safety of the vaccine clearly before the public has continued in the face of attempts to silence her with litigation and undermine her professional standing. In persisting, she has tried to ensure that a scientific account of the weight of evidence is available not only for Japanese families but for public health globally.

The John Maddox Prize, now in its sixth year, is a joint initiative of the leading international scientific journal Nature, the charity Sense about Science, supported by the Kohn Foundation, and is awarded to one or two people a year.

This year the prize received over 100 nominations from 25 countries⁴. The judges³ were struck not only by the diverse circumstances in which nominees persevered with communicating science – which may indicate growing recognition among the international research community of the value of engaging in society - but by the often extreme and unsupportive conditions in which some do this. In many of the examples this year, and in previous years, the judges found a lack of institutional support, and in some cases that the behaviour of researchers' institutions contributed to the problems they faced in public discussion.

As a result, this year the judges have taken the unusual step of drawing attention to the challenges tackled by other nominees (see summary below) and calling for researchers' employers, government agencies, funders and scientific organisations to consider what action they should be taking to ensure that researchers are properly supported and the public continue to have access to their discussions about evidence.

The prize will be announced at 7pm GMT on 30 November at a reception in London.

Comments:

Accepting the prize Dr Muranaka said: "It is a great surprise and pleasure to be awarded such an honourable prize, one that commemorates a great editor and writer Sir John Maddox -- a champion of evidence who believed in promoting sound science in the public interest even in the face of hostility. In terms of my own work, I simply cannot ignore dangerous claims that threaten public health. I want people to hear the truth, that's the reason I continue to write and speak out."

Comments from the judges:

Sir Philip Campbell PhD, Editor-in-Chief, Nature: "I congratulate Dr Muranaka on her achievements and for winning the award. In looking across the entries in this and in previous years, I would also like to emphasise the importance of institutions supporting their scientists who face hostility when standing up for evidence."

Tracey Brown OBE, director, Sense about Science: "John's insistence that we discuss the merits of research - publicly and without regard for fear or favour - could not have been more apparent in this year's nominations. Our highly deserved winner Dr Muranaka has shown the courage and leadership that serves the public well but can put you in a lonely place. It is a place that too many science communicators will recognize and we all need to ask ourselves why that is and how to offer them greater solidarity."

Colin Blakemore, professor of neuroscience and philosophy, School of Advanced Study, University of London: "Once again, the judges were so impressed by stories of the courage and resilience of scientists, medics and journalists who have struggled against prejudice and vested interests. Riko Muranaka stood out because of her long and determined efforts to inform the public, in Japan and the wider world, about the health benefits of HPV vaccination, despite vilification, litigation and threats to her professional standing."

Lord (Martin) Rees of Ludlow OM FRS, University of Cambridge: "It is gratifying to see a more global encouragement of public engagement in research institutions, but these institutions need to show serious thought on how to support researchers through their experiences at the rougher end of public debate, for example when investigating potentially vexatious complaints".

Natasha Loder, *The Economist*: "Speaking truth against vested interests has never been more important. But it is difficult and sometimes comes at great cost. This year, the judges of the John Maddox Prize felt compelled to commend the efforts of a number of entrants. Dr Muranaka's bravery and strength in fighting for public health stood out among this year's brilliant applicants. She is fighting to ensure that Japanese girls have access to the HPV vaccine in the face of a successful misinformation campaign."

Brenda Maddox, patron of the John Maddox Prize: "My late husband John had an unusual combination of knowledge of science and eloquence of expression. Someone once asked him, 'how much of what you print is wrong?' referring to *Nature*. John answered immediately, 'all of it. That's what science is about – new knowledge constantly arriving to correct the old.'"

Dr Katsuyuki Kinoshita, chairman of the Japanese Association of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and nominator of Dr Muranaka for the 2017 John Maddox Prize: "I heartily congratulate Dr Muranaka on her winning of the 2017 John Maddox Prize. Her courageous challenge in demonstrating the safety of the HPV vaccine, despite insult, litigation and attempts to undermine her professional status, epitomises the core spirit of the Maddox Prize. I believe this Prize will have a strong impact on the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, in promoting the use of HPV vaccine in the Japanese society. Furthermore, I hope this award will help convince sceptical medical professionals and journalists of the great public benefit of this vaccine."

Notes to editors:

1. [The John Maddox Prize for Standing up for Science, in its sixth year](#), recognises the work of individuals anywhere in the world who promote sound science and evidence on a matter of public interest, facing difficulty or hostility in doing so. The winners receive a certificate and £2,000. Previous winners were: Professor Elizabeth Loftus (2016), Professor Edzard Ernst, Professor Susan Jebb (2015); Dr Emily Willingham, Dr David Robert Grimes (2014); Professor David Nutt (2013); Professor Sir Simon Wessely, Shi-min Fang (2012).

Candidates were judged on the strength of their nomination based on these criteria:

- How clearly the individual communicated good science, despite adversity.
- The nature of adversity faced by the individual.
- How well they placed the evidence in the wider debate and engaged others.
- Their level of influence on the public debate.

2. [Meeting of the Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety, 7–8 June 2017](#) "There are now accumulated safety studies that include several million persons and which compare the risks for a wide range of health outcomes in vaccinated and unvaccinated subjects. However, despite the extensive safety data available for this vaccine, attention has continued to focus on spurious case reports and unsubstantiated allegations. The Committee continues to express concern that the ongoing unsubstantiated allegations have a demonstrable negative impact on vaccine coverage in a growing number of countries, and that this will result in real harm."

[Human papilloma virus vaccines: WHO position paper, May 2017](#) "Two HPV vaccines are now being marketed in many countries throughout the world - a bivalent and a quadrivalent vaccine. Both vaccines are highly efficacious in preventing infection with virus types 16 and 18, which are together responsible for approximately 70% of cervical cancer cases globally. The vaccines are also highly efficacious in preventing precancerous cervical lesions caused by these virus types. Data from clinical trials and initial post-marketing surveillance conducted in several continents show both vaccines to be safe."

3. The judging panel consisted of Professor Colin Blakemore FRS, Tracey Brown OBE (Sense about Science), Sir Philip Campbell PhD (*Nature*), Lord Rees of Ludlow OM FRS and Natasha Loder (the Economist). The judges sat in a personal capacity and the choice of the award does not indicate the view of any organisation they are associated with.
4. The 2017 John Maddox Prize received over 100 nominations for 95 individuals from 25 different countries. In 2016 there were 59 individuals from 17 countries, 50 in 2015 and 44 in 2014.

Sir John Maddox (1925-2009) was the editor of *Nature* from 1966 to 1973, and from 1980 until 1995, and laid the foundations for *Nature* as it is today, establishing a system of peer review and instituting a strong tradition of journalism. He was also a founding trustee of Sense about Science and the inspiration for many programmes of work including its now internationally established VoYS (Voice of Young Science) network.

This prize commemorates Sir John as a passionate and tireless communicator and defender of science. As a writer and editor at *Nature* for 22 years, he changed attitudes and perceptions, engaging with difficult debates and inspiring others to do the same.

Sir John, in the words of his friend and former *Nature* news editor **Walter Gratzer**: "wrote prodigiously on all that was new and exciting in scientific discovery and technological advance, denouncing fearlessly what he believed to be wrong, dishonest or shoddy. He did it with humour and grace, but he never sidestepped controversy, which he seemed in fact to relish. His forthrightness brought him some enemies, often in high places, but many more friends. He changed attitudes and perceptions, and strove throughout his long working life for a better public understanding and appreciation of science."

About Nature Research

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About Sense about Science

Sense about Science is an independent campaigning charity that challenges the misrepresentation of science and evidence in public life. We advocate openness and honesty about research findings, and work to ensure the public interest in sound science and evidence is recognised in public discussion and policymaking.

Summary of 2017 John Maddox Prize commendations

Researchers and communicators who contest poor scientific thinking face a diverse range of challenges in professional, public and political realms. This year, confronted with over 100 nominations for 95 people from 25 countries, the John Maddox Prize judges have taken the unusual step of drawing attention to a number of shortlisted nominees, with their permission - in order to highlight the extent of these challenges and to ask institutions to consider how their own actions contribute to or improve problems in the communication of science and evidence.

Ahmadreza Djalali

Dr Djalali shares information about improving hospitals' emergency responses to armed terrorism and radiological, chemical and biological threats. An Iranian national and a resident of Sweden, Dr Djalali was arrested in April 2016 during a visit to Iran and accused of "collaboration with a hostile government". Since the judging of the John Maddox Prize, Dr Djalali has been convicted and sentenced to death by a Tehran court.

Terry Hughes

Professor Hughes is a coral reef scientist and has led public debate in Australia about coral bleaching caused by climate change. He has experienced personal criticism from politicians, media outlets and the Australian tourism industry, but has continued to press for informed public debate.

Alain Braillon

Dr Braillon, a tenured senior consultant, was illegally sacked in 2009 by the French Department of Health for statements about research methodology, vested interests and public health threats concerning tobacco and alcohol.

Elena Cattaneo

Professor Cattaneo is pharmacologist and co-founding director of the University of Milan's Centre for Stem Cell Research. Professor Cattaneo has become known in Italy for her relentless campaigning against the misuse of science, particularly in criticising controversial stem cell treatments.

Esther Crawley

Professor Crawley is a consultant paediatrician and a professor of child health at the University of Bristol investigating the treatment of chronic fatigue syndrome / myalgic encephalomyelitis. Professor Crawley works to promote a better understanding of CFS / ME in the face of complaints to her employer and professional bodies and accusations of fraud and misconduct.

Mark Cunningham

Dr Cunningham is a clinical and forensic psychologist in the US, who challenges longstanding misconceptions around the perception of capital offenders. He has faced public hostility and judicial resistance, as well as attacks by prosecutors seeking to limit or prevent his testimony in capital punishment cases. Despite all of this, Dr Cunningham continues to battle institutional resistance.

Richard Davies

Professor Davies is a petroleum geologist at Newcastle University, UK, who has worked to establish the potential environmental impacts of oil and gas extraction including the impact of fracking. In 2006 he led an international team to ascertain the cause of the eruption of the Lusi mud volcano, which led to 60,000 people losing their homes and was the result of a blowout caused by drilling for gas. The oil and gas company payed hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation. Professor Davies has also faced hostility from both sides of the fracking debate.

Leo Igwe

Dr Igwe has been a campaigner for rationality and critical thinking in Africa for many years. He has championed the use of evidence and scientific thinking to challenge the way accusations of witchcraft are levied and tested, which has brought him into conflict with many high-profile witchcraft believers. He has been arrested several times in Nigeria, as well as being subject to physical attacks.

Rosie Woodroffe

Professor Woodroffe at the Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London has faced consistent hostility for her work championing a scientifically-based approach to the control of bovine TB in relation to badgers. This includes her work highlighting that current UK Government policy does not follow the best scientific evidence.

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女性の健康の守護者 村中璃子医師
2017年 ジョン・マドックス賞受賞

困難や敵意にも関わらず、公共の利益に資するサイエンスとエビデンスを広めた人物に与える国際賞、ジョン・マドックス賞を日本の村中璃子医師が受賞した。ジャーナリストでもあり京都大学非常勤講師でもある村中氏が、子宮頸がんワクチンに関する一般的な議論（パブリック・ディベート）にサイエンスと科学的エビデンスを持ち込んだ功績に対するものである。

子宮頸がんワクチンは、子宮頸がんやその他のがんを防ぐ鍵であるとして科学界・医学界において広く認知され、世界保健機構（WHO）にも推奨されている。しかし、日本ではこのワクチンへの信頼を損なわせる誤った情報キャンペーンが行われ、70%だった接種率は1%以下に落ち込んだ。

村中氏のワクチンの安全性に関するエビデンスを社会に伝えようとする仕事に対し、訴訟で沈黙させ、専門家としての評価を傷つけようとする力が執拗に働いた。しかし、村中氏は、科学的エビデンスに裏づけられた情報が日本の家族の手に届くよう、そして、世界の公衆衛生のために努力し続けた。

今年で6年目を迎えるジョン・マドックス賞は、世界をリードする国際的科学誌「ネイチャー」と、慈善団体「センス・アバウト・サイエンス」による共催で、コーン財団の支援のもと、毎年1人か2人の人物に贈られる。

今年は25カ国から100を超える推薦があった。審査委員会は、社会にサイエンスを伝える言論活動の置かれた状況の多様さだけでなく、推薦者たちが直面している極端で孤立無援の状況にも驚愕した。今年も昨年も、審査委員会は、サイエンスを社会に伝える人たちに対する組織や制度としての支援（institutional support）が無いこと、そして、彼らがパブリック・ディベートにおいて個人的に厳しい状況に直面した際に、所属する組織や団体の制度そのものが問題になっている場合すらあることに気づいた。

そのため審査委員会は今年、受賞者だけでなく他の候補者を発表することを通じ、所属団体や政府機関、支援機関や学術団体などに対し、どのようにして彼らを支援し、彼らの示すエビデンスに社会がアクセスし続けるようサポートできるかを考えるよう促すことにした。

受賞者はロンドンの授賞式にて、11月30日午後7時（グリニッジビレッジ標準時）に公表される。

◆受賞者コメント

村中璃子： 優れた編集者であり書き手でもあったジョン・マドックス卿を記念した名誉ある賞を受賞したことを、驚きと喜びをもって受け止めている。私には公衆衛生を脅かす危険な主張を無視することができない。私には人々に真実を伝える必要がある。それが私の書き続ける理由だ。

◆審査委員コメント

フィリップ・キャンベル、「ネイチャー」誌 編集長：村中璃子医師、受賞おめでとう。エビデンスを守るため敵意に立ち向かおうとする科学者たちに対し、組織的・制度的なサポートの重要性を強く感じる。

トレイシー・ブラウン、「センス・アバウト・サイエンス」理事長：今年の候補者の顔ぶれを見れば、ジョン・マドックス卿のこだわった、恐れることも肩を持つこともなく、研究や科学についてパブリックに話し合うことの重要性は明らかだろう。この意味において、村中氏の受賞は非常にふさわしいものだ。村中氏は、サイエンスを社会に伝えるための勇気と優れたリーダーシップを発揮したが、彼女を孤独にもした。この孤独は多くの科学の書き手、伝え手たちが知るところであり、私たちは、団結がなぜ必要なのかを改めて自らに問い直す必要がある。

コリン・ブラックモア、ロンドン大学先端研究所 神経科学・哲学教授： 審査員たちは、数々の科学者、医療者、ジャーナリストたちの、偏見と既得権益に立ち向かう勇気、不屈の精神の物語に改めて感銘を受けた。中でも、専門家としての評価を傷つけようとする誹謗中傷、訴訟、強迫にもかかわらず、日本と広い世界に向け、子宮頸がんワクチンのベネフィットに関して情報発信した村中璃子氏の決然たる努力は際立っていた。

マーティン・リーズ・オブ・ルドロウ、ケンブリッジ大学： 世界的に見た場合、学術機関・学術団体による社会貢献が評価されつつあることは好ましい傾向である。しかし、学術機関・学術団体は、困難なパブリック・ディベートに遭遇した研究者をどうサポートするかについて真剣に考え、行動したことがあるのだろうか。たとえば、訴訟を起こされたというような場合に。

ナターシャ・ローダー、「エコノミスト」誌： 既得権益や利益団体に真実をつきつけることほど重要なことは無い。しかしそれは困難で、時に大変な代償を伴う。今年、ジョン・マドックス賞の審査委員たちは、何人もの候補者に賞を贈りたい気持ちになった。しかし、村中氏の勇敢さと強さは数々の素晴らしい候補者の中で抜きんでていた。彼女は、誤った情報キャンペーンが成功をおさめる中、日本人の少女たちが子宮頸がんワクチンにアクセスできるよう戦い続けている。

ブレンダ・マドックス、ジョン・マドックス賞パトロン： 私の亡くなった夫ジョンは、科学的知識と豊かな表現力の両方に恵まれた類まれな人だった。誰かが、彼にこう尋ねたことがある。「ネイチャーに掲載された話のうちどのくらいが間違いだったと思うか？」ジョンはすぐに答えた。「全部だ。それがサイエンスだから。サイエンスとは、常に新しい知識が訪れ、古い知識を修正していくものだ」

木下勝之 日本産婦人科医会会長、村中氏の推薦者： 村中氏の2017年ジョン・マドックス賞受賞を心から祝福したい。誹謗中傷、訴訟、専門家としての評価を傷つけるようなあらゆる攻撃にも関わらず、子宮頸がんワクチンの安全性を社会に示そうとした彼女の勇気ある挑戦は、ジョン・マドックス賞の精神そのものである。彼女の受賞は、日本の厚生労働省による子宮頸がんワクチンの接種勧奨に関し大きなインパクトを与えるだろう。さらに言えば、この受賞が子宮頸がんワクチンの大きな公衆衛生的ベネフィットに対して疑いを持つ、医療関係者やジャーナリストに科学的な理解を促すことを期待している。